(b) whether it is also a fact that the country is fully competent to build and manage atomic plant (FBR) based on Thorium as an alternative to the fuel of Uranium and the technique and technology related to it; and

(c) if so, details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTERS OFFICE (SHRI PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Presently we have the capacity to build and operate Fast Breeder Reactors (FBR) based on Uranium-Plutonium fuel cycle. Fast Breeder Reactor is in operation at Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research (IGCAR) at Kalpakkam since 1985. The 500 MWe Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor is under construction at Kalpakkam. Deployment of Thorium systems is envisaged only after sufficient installed capacity has been set up using fast reactors based on uranium-plutonium fuel. Comprehensive R& D for Thorium reactors and associated fuel cycle is being actively pursued.

Nuclear Power Programme

417. SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether firm plans are under way to press ahead with India's indigenous nuclear power programme as India is facing uranium shortage;

(b) if so, the main programme that have been worked out to meet the uranium shortage in the country; and

(c) by when complete action plan is being considered to improve the nuclear power programme in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTERS OFFICE (SHRI PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN): (a) Yes, Sir. The country has sufficient minable uranium resources to support a capacity of 10,000 MWe of Pressurized Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs) in the first stage of nuclear power pgoramme. So far, PHWRs of 3800 MWe capacity have been set up and PHWRs of 660 MWe capacity are under construction. PHWRs of 5600 MWe capacity are planned to be set up in future along with the required Uranium production capacity. The second stage of the nuclear power programme will use fuel derived from the spent fuel of the first stage. The indigenous nuclear power programme is thus on course.

(b) The current mismatch between supply and demand of fuel is temporary. The Government has taken steps to segment supply of uranium by opening new mines and augmenting processing facilities. With the commencement of operations at the new uranium processing mill at Turamdih, availability of uranium is expected to improve progressively.

(c) Action plan for nuclear power programme is already in place.

Production of electricity

† 418. SHRI RAJ MOHINDER SINGH MAJITHA:
DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI :

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the statement given by the Chairman of Nuclear Power

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

Corporation of India Limited, in which he has stated the present capacity of production of electricity in the Nuclear area in the country to be 10,000 MW;

(b) if so, whether it is a fact that Government have recently assessed the capacity of production of electricity in the nuclear field in the country; and

(c) if so, this assessment and the actual production in the year 2007-08?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SHRI PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN): (a) The correct statement made by Chairman and Managing Director, Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited was "the country has enough resources of natural uranium to support the operation of 10,000 MWe of Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors".

(b) and (c) The target for electricity generation in the year 2007-08 is 22714 Million Units (MUs). The production in the first seven months has been 10189 MUs. Based on current assessment, the target for the year 2007-08 is expected to be met.

Atomic Energy Sector

† 419. SHRI RAM JETHMALANI:
SHRI RAJ MOHINDER SINGH MAJITHA:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that five electricity generating units of Atomic Energy Sector functioning in the country have been closed simultaneously due to the non-availability of fuel;

(b) if so, the fact thereof;

(c) the details of the units that have been closed and the yearly requirement of fuel for their operation; and

(d) whether there is dependency on import in order to fulfil the fuel requirement of the said units?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SHRI PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN): (a) No, Sir. Reactors are periodically shut down for various maintenance and inspection jobs as and when required.

(b) Not applicable.

(c) No reactors have been closed due to non-availability of fuel.

(d) No, Sir.

Hydro-power generation

420. SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether dip in hydro power generation raises alarm bells as the share of hydroelectric capacity in the country's total power generation capacity has diminished over the last three and half decades from about 46 per cent in 1970, it dropped to 40 per cent in 1980,29 per cent in 1990 and, again to just 20 per cent in 2007;

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.